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April 8, 1949

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MEMORANDUM FOR:

Mr. Theodore Babbitt
Assistant Director
Reports and Estimates
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT:

Analysis of Soviet Press and Radio Reaction

I am attaching the information on "Soviet Press and Radio Reaction" requested in your memorandum 30 March to the Special Assistant for Research and Intelligence.

A. Sidney Burford

A. Sidney Burford, III

Acting Director

Office of Intelligence Research

17359

Attachment

APR 22 1949

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SOVIET PRESS TREATMENT OF ATOMIC BOMB EXPLOSIONS, THE MERCK REPORT, AND
FORRESTAL STATEMENT ON BACTERIOLOGICAL WARFARE

Soviet press reaction to the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to the Bikini and Eniwetok tests was very small. No discussion on the use and effects of the atomic bomb in those particular places ever appeared in Pravda, Izvestiya, or Trud, except in the case of the Bikini tests. The coverage was confined to an official US communique on August 6, 1945 (published on August 7 and 8, 1945) and brief slanted news items regarding subsequent atomic tests.

A. Hiroshima and Nagasaki

The Hiroshima bombing was reported as a routine foreign news item on the back page; portions of the White House release on the subject were quoted, including the statement that the explosion exceeded "the destructive force of 20,000 tons of dynamite." No report of the Nagasaki bombing appeared in the press. Further mention of the atomic bomb appeared in reprints of President Truman's speech upon his return from Potsdam, which were included in the August 11 editions. Abbreviated quotations of subsequent public statements by President Truman, General Chennault, and Mr. Byrnes on the atomic bomb were published in September and October of 1945. Allegations in US newspapers, stating that the use of the atomic bomb rather than the Soviet declaration of war on Japan and the destruction of the Kwantung army ended the Pacific war, were denied as early as August 16, 1945 in Izvestiya.

The first important statement in the press from a Soviet source was Molotov's speech on the 28th Anniversary of the October Revolution, on November 7, 1945:

In this connection (the maintenance of peace) it is necessary to mention the discovery of atomic energy and the atomic bomb, whose enormous destructive power was demonstrated in the war with Japan. Atomic energy, nevertheless, has not yet been tested in the matter of preventing aggression or guarding the peace. On the other hand, at the present time it is inconceivable that technical secrets of such importance will remain the property of any one country or a limited group of countries. Therefore the discovery of atomic energy must not encourage either enthusiasm concerning the use of that discovery in power politics or neglect of the future of peace-loving peoples.

Subsequent statements on the atomic bomb are confined to discussions of the UN Atomic Energy Control Commission, the use of the atomic bomb as a political weapon by the Western nations, and the alleged failure of the bomb to fulfill the expectations of the American press.

B. Bikini tests

The first Bikini test was reported by the July 3, 1946 edition of all newspapers in a TASS story from New York, based on Associated Press and Reuters reports. The comments by TASS minimized the effect of the bombing. On the same day a feature article on the Bikini test appeared in Pravda, which criticized the expenditure on the test, the results, and the alleged non-scientific nature of the test, and commented upon plans for control of the bomb. No further reaction appeared until July 26, when a TASS report of the underwater test of July 24 was published, again based on an Associated Press story. The effect of the explosion on the ships and the atoll was minimized.

C. Eniwetok test

No report on the test at Eniwetok appeared in the press.

D. The Merck report and Mr. Forrestal's press release of March 13, 1949 on BW

No comment on either appeared in the Soviet press.

*Note!
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matter
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